Gifted People and their Problems

by Francis Heylighen

Highly gifted people have a number of personality traits that set them apart, and that are not obviously connected to the traits of intelligence, IQ, or creativity that are most often used to define the category. Many of these traits have to do with their particularly intense feelings and emotions, others with their sometimes awkward social interactions. These traits make that these people are typically misunderstood and underestimated by peers, by society, and usually even by themselves. As such, most of their gifts are actually underutilized, and they rarely fulfill their full creative potential. This is particularly true for gifted women, as they don't fit the stereotypes that society has either of women or of gifted people (typically seen as men).

The present document is a quick attempt at sketching the overall picture, summarizing the essential characteristics and the kind of problems they tend to give rise to. While this is mostly a collection of existing material, I intend to prepare a paper offering a novel interpretation of these data on the basis of a cybernetic/cognitive/evolutionary thinking.

Summary of traits

The following is a digest of the traits that are most often listed as characterizing "gifted" or "creative" individuals. The number of "*" signs indicates how often this trait (or a very similar one) appeared in one of the lists that I found on the web. I have ordered the traits in different categories, in order to emphasize that these traits extend much further than just intelligence and knowledge (cognition).

As a comparison, I have also included the traits (indicated by a "•") from Maslow's description of what he calls the "self-actualizing personality". There is obviously a strong overlap in both lists, although Maslow seems to virtually ignore the cognitive traits, while emphasizing the motivational and emotional ones, in accord with his motivation-based theory. The fact that in spite of this very different basis to establish two personality types, the overlap is so obvious, confirms my own reinterpretation of Maslow's theory in which I argue that self-actualization requires not only need satisfaction, but cognitive competence, i.e. knowledge and intelligence. (Heylighen F. (1992): "A Cognitive-Systemic Reconstruction of Maslow's Theory of Self-Actualization", *Behavioral Science* 37, p. 39-58.)

Cognition

**********•	original, unusual ideas, creativity, connects seemingly unrelated ideas.
*******	superior abilities to reason, generalize or problem solve, high intelligence
******	vivid and rich imagination
******	extensive vocabulary, verbal ability, fascinated by words,
*****	learns new things rapidly.
*****	excellent long term memory.
****	grasps mathematical/scientific concepts readily, advanced comprehension, insightful.
****	avid reader.
***	complex and deep thoughts, abstract thinker,
**	runs mind on multiple tracks at the same time, fast thinker

Perception/emotion

*******	highly sensitive
*******•	excellent/unusual sense of humour.
******•	very perceptive, good sense of observation.
*****•	passionate, intense feelings.

***•	sensitive to small changes in environment
***	introverted
**•	aware of things that others are not, perceive world differently
**•	tolerance for ambiguity & complexity
**	can see many sides, considers problems from a number of viewpoints.
*•	childlike sense of wonder.
•	openness to experience
•	emotional stability, serenity

Motivation/values

**********	perfectionistic, sets high standards for self and others.
*********•	very curious, desire to know
********•	very independent, autonomous, less motivated by rewards and praise
*******•	seeker of ultimate truths, looks for patterns, meaning in life
*******	enjoys challenge, penchant for risk-taking.
******•	outrage at injustice or moral breaches, good sense of justice
****•	wide range of interests, overwhelmed by many interests and abilities.
****•	strong moral convictions, integrity, honesty.
****•	high drive
**•	visionary, realizes visions, sense of destiny or mission
**	loves ideas and ardent discussion.
•	sincerity
•	acceptance of self and others

Activity

*******	great deal of energy.
******•	long attention span, sustains concentration on topics of interest, persistent
****	cannot stop thinking, work myself to exhaustion
***•	needs periods of contemplation, solitude
•	spontaneity

Social relations

*********•	questions rules or authority, asks embarrassing questions, non-conforming
*******•	feels different, out of step with others, sense of alienation and loneliness.
*****•	very compassionate.
****•	empathy: feels along with others, helps them understand themselves

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Quotes from other sources

This is a collection of bits and snippets that I collected from the Web. *Emphasis* in the longer quotes is mine. Search quote in Google to find its source.

Characteristics of Creative Genius

I have always had an insatiable curiosity.
I am able to run my mind on multiple tracks at the same time.
I learn rapidly and retain / apply what I learn.
I tend to be very independent.
I tend to be less motivated than others are by rewards, bonuses, and praise.
At times I have asked embarrassing questions or rudely pointed out truths at the wrong time.
My preference for the complex can fool me into underestimating the simple answer.
I like to refine and improve others' innovations.
I feel comfortable with a wide range of emotions.
I can see many sides to nearly any issue.
Honesty, integrity, and ethics are important to me.

I can help others understand themselves better.
I am a seeker and champion of ultimate truths.
My nervous system is easily aroused, and I am able to discern the slightest changes in my environment (aromas, shifts in light, etc.) or detect irritants (e.g. scratchy sweater label).
I can feel along with and for others.
I set high standards for myself and for others and am my own worst critic.
I tend to look for consistency and security in systems, rules, and orderliness.
I am often considered a "driven" person.
I have maintained my childlike sense of wonder.
I am intent on searching out universal truths.
I am deeply disturbed by inequity, exploitation, corruption, and needless human suffering.
I can and do work myself to exhaustion.
Some people think I'm too serious.
I have always been interested in social reform.
I value and will defend diversity.
I have a strong need to "make a difference."
I have a penchant for risk-taking.
I can and do ignore my own needs for the sake of others.

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Characteristics of Gifted Adults

Perfectionistic and sets high standards for self and others.
Has strong moral convictions.
Is highly sensitive, perceptive or insightful.
Fascinated by words or an avid reader.
Feels out-of-sync with others.
Is very curious.
Has an unusual sense of humour.
A good problem solver.
Has a vivid and rich imagination.
Questions rules or authority.
Has unusual ideas or connects seemingly unrelated ideas.
Thrives on challenge.
Learns new things rapidly.
Has a good long-term memory.
Feels overwhelmed by many interests and abilities.
Is very compassionate.
Feels outrage at moral breaches that the rest of the world seems to take for granted.
Has passionate, intense feelings.
Has a great deal of energy.
Can't switch off thinking.
Feels driven by creativity.
Loves ideas and ardent discussion.
Needs periods of contemplation.
Searches for ???? in their life.
Feels a sense of alienation and loneliness.
Is very perceptive.
Feels out of step with others.

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Normal Behavior for Gifted People

It is NORMAL for Gifted People to:
Have complex and deep thoughts.
Feel intense emotions.
Ask lots of questions.
Be highly sensitive.
Set high standards for themselves.

Have strong moral convictions.
Feel different & out-of-sync.
Be curious.
Have a vivid imagination.
Question rules or authority.
Thrive on challenge.
Feel passion and compassion.
Have a great deal of energy.
Have an unusual sense of humour.
Feel outrage at injustice.
Look for meaning in life.
Feel sad about the state of the world.
Feel a spiritual connection to life.

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Most Prevalent Characteristics of Giftedness

99.4% learn rapidly
99.4% have extensive vocabulary
99.3% have excellent memory
99.3% reason well
97.9% are curious
96.1% are mature for their age at times
95.9% have an excellent sense of humor
93.8% have a keen sense of observation
93.5% have compassion for others
93.4% have a vivid imagination
93.4% have a long attention span
92.9% have ability with numbers
90.3% are concerned with justice and fairness
89.4% have facility with puzzles and legos
88.4% have a high energy level
88.3% are perfectionistic
85.9% are perseverant in their areas of interest
84.1% question authority
80.3% are avid readers

Descriptions

90% were described by their parents as "sensitive."
83% like to concentrate on one activity at a time.
79% report high energy or activity levels.
44% are sensitive to clothing tags and other tactile sensations.

A Glossary of Gifted Education

Giftedness and education from the perspective of sociologic social psychology
by Steven M. Nordby © 1997-2002

Levels of giftedness

According to IQ measurements, the following labels are generally accepted:

* Bright - 115 and above
* Gifted - 130 and above
* Highly gifted - 145 and above
* Exceptionally gifted -160 and above
* Profoundly gifted - 175 and above

Because of measurement error and ceiling effect, the exceptionally and profoundly gifted labels are often used interchangably.

Characteristics of the gifted

The following characteristics are common but not universal:

* Shows superior abilities to reason, generalize or problem solve.
* Shows persistent intellectual curiosity.
* Has a wide range of interests; develops one or more interests to considerable depth.
* Produces superior written work or has a large vocabulary.
* Reads avidly.
* Learns quickly and retains what is learned.
* *Grasps mathematical or scientific concepts readily.*
* Shows creative ability or imaginative expression in the arts.
* Sustains concentration for lengthy periods on topics or activities of interest.
* Sets high standards for self.
* Shows initiative, originality, or flexibility in thinking; considers problems from a number of viewpoints.
* Observes keenly and is responsive to new ideas.
* Shows social poise or an ability to communicate with adults in a mature way.
* Enjoys intellectual challenge; shows an alert and subtle sense of humor.

These characteristics can lead to conflicts in the regular classroom, as the gifted child may:

* Get bored with routine tasks.
* Resist changing away from interesting topics or activities.
* Be overly critical of self and others, impatient with failure, perfectionistic.
* Disagree vocally with others, argue with teachers.
* Make jokes or puns at times adults consider inappropriate.
* Be so emotionally sensitive and empathetic that adults consider it over-reaction, may get angry, or cry when things go wrong or seem unfair.
* Ignore details, turn in messy work.
* Reject authority, be non-conforming, stubborn.
* Dominate or withdraw in cooperative learning situations.
* Be highly sensitive to environmental stimuli such as lights or noises.

These reactions of gifted students to the regular education environment are normal only within the context of an understanding of the gifted. Without that understanding, they may be used to label the student as ADD/ADHD or SED. See overexcitabilities.

Overexcitabilities -

A term originated by Kazimierz Dabrowski to describe excessive response to stimuli in five psychic domains (psychomotor, sensual, intellectual, imaginational, and emotional) which may occur singly or in combination. Overexcitabilities are often used to describe certain characteristics of the gifted. “It is often recognized that gifted and talented people are energetic, enthusiastic, intensely absorbed in their pursuits, endowed with vivid imagination, sensuality, moral sensitivity and emotional vulnerability. . . . [They are] experiencing in a higher key.” - Michael Piechowski. Extreme overexcitabilities or a strong imbalance between them may reduce the individual's ability to function in society.

The Intellectual and Psychosocial Nature of Extreme Giftedness

Philip M. Powell & Tony Haden
Roeper Review , Vol. 6 No. 3, p. 131-133, February 1984.

The highly gifted are rare in the population. Using IQ scores as a gross index to assess this rarity, those with IQ's of 150 and above occur about 5-7 times out of 10,000 persons. The literature about them is also rare. Nevertheless, the attempt to understand the highly gifted is valuable because it can help us to help them achieve their potential. It has been reported that the higher the level of giftedness, the greater the chance of psychological and social adjustment difficulties. [...]

Terman and Oden, (1959) found that the four traits which distinguished the gifted from the control group of normal or average children most clearly were:

* General intelligence
* *Desire to know*
* Originality
* Common sense

Torrance (1965) has argued that the gifted are independent thinkers. Dunn and Price (1980) provided evidence to show that those of average ability have a greater need for external structure than the intellectually gifted. One important difference, then, between average persons and their gifted counterparts is in the need of externally imposed structure. Gifted persons are more likely to make sense out of their intellectual experiences than the average person.

Another important difference is in the desire to know complex ideas. Average persons have less desire to know ideas for their own sake. They substitute participation in social affairs for idea dominance or the preference for thinking and generating ideas argued as characteristic of the mentally gifted (Powell, 1982). The possession of the desire to know means that gifted individuals have a *need to search for the inherent pattern, logic or meaning* in a set of data information, while average people prefer to have the pattern, logic, or meaning already generated and explained.

[...]

The highly gifted, on the other hand, have the greatest capacity to create structure and organize data and the greatest need to know. At this extreme, *such people can create whole disciplines (De Candolle) and/or frameworks for comprehending the universe (Newton and Einstein).*
[...]

Another problem for the highly gifted is they grow up with and are often socialized by significant others who do not understand them well enough to guide their ideas and actions with valid feedback. This was true of Leopold and Loeb, who were given free rein to go and do as they pleased at an early age. *Parents can also vacillate between being proud of and being scared of the achievements of the highly gifted child.* Parental pride in achievement can quickly turn to a fear of social stigma which can cause parents to give their gifted child inconsistent feedback. Hence, highly gifted children are never quite sure if it is good or bad to be very bright. Thus, their concept of the value of being very gifted develops slowly and ambivalently.

Peers, especially children, *are often confused by the highly gifted person* because it is difficult to identify with their superior cognitive abilities. They may downplay the degree of superiority of the highly gifted by invalidating feedback. If this feedback is internalized, a self-conception may be constructed based on underrating the self. Clark (1979) reported on a young female student who had spent 18 years believing she was not intelligent because she asked more questions than the others in class. Later, in Clark's university class, when the characteristics of the gifted were discussed, the woman was so moved that she decided to say that she identified with the gifted even though she knew she was not gifted. She was so stirred by the class that later that evening she called her parents. During a conversation with them, the woman student found out that she has a measured IQ of 165. School personnel had advised her parents not to discuss her extraordinary IQ with her. This resulted in a low level of academic seIf-esteem and the ridiculous self-conception of being stupid!

[...]

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As a highly gifted 12 year old described it: "*A real friend is a place you go when you need to take off the masks*. You can say what you want to your friend because you know that your friend will really listen and even if he doesn't like what you say, he will still like you. You can take off your camouflage with a real friend and still feel safe."

On Giftedness, an interview with Mary Rocamora

Giftedness these days in the research community is being understood more as an inner experience or process than external products like symphonies and films and dance companies and things of that order.

And the research community is far more interested now in studying the nature of that inner process, and expanding the scope of it to *go beyond just high intelligence*, which we know is a component of giftedness, to include other qualities like *sensitivity*, *perfectionism*; a quality called entelechy, which is associated with being a *visionary*, having a personal vision, and being able to actualize that vision from within - rather than needing other people externally to realize it.

Qualities like *introversion* are also common among gifted people, and another quality called the *autonomous* factor - which means that if you're gifted, you're not interested in whether other people see the value of what you're doing, and you don't relate your work so much to other people's opinion, but more to how that vision seems to you, how important it seems to you.

There's also idealism with a lot of gifted people, where there's a sense of disparity between what we are and what we could be, and that disparity becomes the fuel for an inner self-becoming toward perfection. [...]

People might be scared or intimidated of gifted people because of our societal stereotypes that the gifted are somehow above everyone, and that's not the case. A gifted person is not a morally superior human being, necessarily.

Also people may fear others will think they're stuck up if they think of themselves as gifted - and there's the stereotype, right there. And that's one of the real struggles of embracing one's own giftedness is that we have these ideas in this culture that gifted people are arrogant, gifted people are snooty, that they think they're better than others. And that's typically not the case; they're more likely to feel inadequate to others, because of their own high standards. [...]

I've never seen giftedness expire. I've seen it get worse - that the sensitivity deepens, the perfectionism gets more intense, the excitability factor - all this energy will erupt, just makes more of itself.

All of these things refer to people who are self-aware; for people who don't have the awareness, they could easily just die on the vine. And this often happens to gifted girls: because of cultural conditioning it's known that gifted girls lose one IQ point per year growing up in the school system. They don't get the mirroring and they don't get the mentoring - and they're 'just girls'. [...]

Kathleen Noble , interview by Douglas Eby

[...]

The starting point, Dr. Noble declares, "is always self-awareness, which is not narcissism.And for gifted women, that absolutely includes the recognition of giftedness, because most women who are gifted, as you well know, *think they're freaks, and feel horribly different -- isolated, alienated, ostracized, 'What's wrong with me?'* [...]

"Change has to come in terms of both social evolution and individual. Most of the women I work with who are gifted deny that they are, or are totally embarrassed to admit it. It seems I am always teaching women about the characteristics of giftedness, and asking them to look at themselves: 'Even if you don't want to admit this out loud because you think it's immodest or because you're embarrassed, at least in your own heart of hearts admit what you're dealing with.' [...]

Isolation seems to be a common issue for gifted women, Dr. Noble feels. "And part of the isolation has to do with introversion. Not all, certainly, but I'd say *the majority of gifted women are introverted*. And introversion by itself leads one to isolate. When you're introverted in an introverted culture, there's more acceptance; but America is a very extroverted culture. To be introverted in an extroverted culture is to sort of give you a double whammy.

"So along with understanding what giftedness is all about, it's important to understand what introversion is all about, and that it's a normal temperament, and they really get their energy from solitude. So they need that solitude. That's healthy. In fact, to *not make space for solitude really puts gifted women at grave risk* for developing everything from depression to eating disorders, as a way of trying to create enough personal space, maybe totally unconsciously.

"Another thing is that part of giftedness involves an *affective awareness*. Not a hundred percent of the time, but a lot of gifted women have intense radar; they're very psychic, and that can intensify introversion, if you withdraw from crowds because you always feel raw, or pick up too much energy. So if you do have that kind of sensitivity, you really have to honor it, and

respect it, and learn how to choose those energies that nourish you and avoid those that drain you. That's hard. We're learning all the time.

"In terms of *finding peers*, you have to realize it *is hard, and you have to work at it.* [...]

The internet is providing the means to find and explore relationships. "That's particularly important for rural women," notes Dr. Noble. "It's a little bit *easier to find kindred spirits if* you're in a city, or if *you're connected with a university* or some kind of idea factory. It's much harder if you're in the corporate world or the retail world, or at home with small children." [...]

There are a number of qualities that gifted women possess that can easily get mislabeled and misdiagnosed. For instance, those gifted women who are very verbal are often told they talk too much. Now, it is true that many gifted women talk a lot.

"Some of them do in fact talk too much, and don't know how to listen well. But I have seen, particularly in adolescents, that gifted girls who are very high energy and high verbal are often punished by teachers for those qualities, and the qualities are then negatively represented, rather than positively acknowledged. [...]

gifted women tend to combine qualities that we tend to ascribe to both genders. So for instance, you get women who are highly sensitive and *highly empathic and compassionate* (which are all components of psychic ability), combined with high energy and *high drive, high independence and autonomy*, which are qualities that the culture rewards in men but not in women.

"So in some ways, the pathologizing comes from the fact that *gifted women, by their very nature, don't fit the narrowly prescribed gender roles.* And not just in a developed country like America, or Canada, but also in *developing countries, where roles are generally even more traditional*.

"Societal attitudes create what we consider normalcy to be. So when you talk about pathology, you are talking about deviation from what is presumed to be in the norm, and anything that is outlying statistically, or different from what we consider the norm, gets labeled pathology or 'bad.' [...]

"Giftedness, per se, has often been described as pathology. I've had a lot of clients who come to me who have been told they are *'too sensitive', 'too empathic', 'too smart'*, 'too verbal.' I can't think of one person I've seen who hasn't been pathologized, for being 'too' -- and I put that in quotes -- all those things: 'too high energy', 'too quirky', 'too introspective', 'too intuitive' -- blah, blah, blah.

"It just depends on the setting. One of my clients is a physician who's extremely intuitive: when she was in medical school, she could make diagnoses that she hadn't the knowledge yet to be able to make, but she could read the body. And of course, what did her professors tell her? 'You're so weird.'

"That's why I think if a person, a gifted woman, is going to seek help from a therapist, the first she has to do is educate herself about giftedness. That is critical. And then she has to educate her therapist about giftedness, because very, very few mental health practitioners know the first thing about it."

Behaviors Associated with Giftedness (Webb, 1993)

Poor attention, boredom, *daydreaming* in specific situations
Low tolerance for persistence on tasks that seem irrelevant
Judgment lags behind development of intellect
Intensity may lead to *power struggles with authorities*
High activity level; may need less sleep
Questions rules, customs and traditions
Consider the Situation and Setting

In the classroom, a gifted child's perceived inability to stay on task is likely to be related to boredom, curriculum, mismatched learning style, or other environmental factors. Gifted children may spend from one-fourth to one-half of their regular classroom time *waiting for others to catch up* -- even more if they are in a heterogeneously grouped class. Their specific level of academic achievement is often two to four grade levels above their actual grade placement. Such children often respond to non-challenging or slow-moving classroom situations by "off-task" behavior, disruptions, or other attempts at self-amusement.

Misdiagnosis of the Gifted

by Lynne Azpeitia, M.A. and Mary Rocamora, M.A.

Gifted individuals face many challenges. One of them may be in getting correctly identified by psychotherapists and others as gifted.

It's well known among researchers of the gifted, talented and creative that these individuals exhibit greater intensity and increased levels of emotional, imaginational, intellectual, sensual and psychomotor excitability and that this is a normal pattern of development. It is because these gifted children and adults have a finely tuned psychological structure and an organized awareness that they experience all of life differently and more Intensely than those around them.

These characteristics, however, are frequently perceived by psychotherapists and others as evidence of a mental disturbance because most of the population lacks accurate information about the special characteristics of gifted individuals, couples and families. Most people don't know that *what is considered normal for the gifted is most often labeled as neurosis in the general population* and as a result, *the gifted are personally and emotionally vulnerable to a variety of unique relationship difficulties* at home, work, school and in the community.

Since the gifted function with relatively high levels of intensity and sensitivity, when they seek therapy they are frequently misdiagnosed because therapists receive no specialized training in the identification and treatment of persons who have advanced and complex patterns of development.

Therapeutic assessment of gifted persons with asynchronous development, heightened levels of awareness, energy and emotional response, and an intense level of inner turmoil often results in their developmental transition being mislabeled as a personality or attentional disorder. Histrionic, dysthymic, cyclothymic, *borderline*, narcissistic, ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder) or ADD (Attention Deficit Disorder) are a few of the diagnostic labels mistakenly used to describe normative stages of positive disintegration.

The results of this type of misdiagnosis can range from benign neglect to misguided counseling strategies that invalidate and attempt to 'normalize' the complex inner process of the gifted. When misdiagnosed gifted clients are prescribed medication to suppress the "symptoms of giftedness" there is the danger that the wonderful inner fury of the gifted process will be neutralized, thus minimalizing the potential for a life of accomplishment and fulfillment. As a result, those who have the most to offer society are the least likely to get their therapeutic needs met.

For the gifted, inner conflict is a developmental rather than a degenerative sign, because it drives the gifted person forward to replace current ways of thinking and being with those of higher level development. This type of positive disintegration is characterized by an intensified inner tension between what one is and what one could be. This dynamic tension is what fuels the creative person's complex inner life and provides the impetus for growth and development. Any therapist who works with a gifted population must be familiar with these internal processes, which are utilized to develop advanced potential - otherwise, the therapist risks inflicting further psychological damage.

When working with the gifted, a therapist must address the following intrapersonal issues: the internal stress of being gifted; the emotional trauma of rapid development; the effects of introversion, intensity, perfectionism and extraordinary sensitivity on self and others; the recognition of the symptoms of insufficient mental engagement; the importance of interacting with other gifted persons, and channeling and focusing an abundance of physical, sensual, intellectual and emotional energy.

Unique interpersonal challenges that gifted individuals, couples and families encounter during their life span include learning to interact in the mainstream world; manage expectations and pressures to fit the norm; *defuse unconscious hostility, resentment, antagonism and sabotage directed at them because they are perceived as intellectually, creatively or personally advantaged*; set appropriate boundaries for the utilization of their abilities; collaborate with others, and manage the daily dilemmas of giftedness involving relatives, bosses, co-workers, neighbors, counselors, teachers and other members of the community.

Other problems, ways in which giftedness complicates things:

Tolerance for ambiguity & complexity leads to *difficulty making decisions, difficulty with career path*

Intensity: too needy, too sensitive, too friendly, too excited, too driven, too disorganized, too fast, too competitive, too arrogant, work too hard Anti-procrastination disease

Desire for high stimulus situations: mischief, smug, bored, know-it-all; or procrastination, risk taking, need to make life difficult in order to feel like a hero

Thinking too much, can't turn it off, obsessional style

Not having goals or never being satisfied; perfectionism; confusing exhaustion for accomplishment

Possible Concomitant Problems Resulting from the Behavioural Characteristics of the Gifted Child.

Differentiating characteristics of the Gifted Child.	**Possible problems**
Huge store of facts. Superb long term memory.	Boredom and impatience in class.
Very fast thinker.	*May get frustrated with others who think slowly in comparison.*
Very advanced comprehension	Hates rote-learning. Gets called "Smart-Alec" or similar. Irritated by the level of presentation of school work.
Creative thinker.	May be seen as disruptive.
Long attention span on things of interest.	Resents being interrupted. May not even listen.
Highly curious. Many interests.	*Starts many projects - perhaps does not finish them when the concepts have been drained and the work becomes tedious*. May not work well in a group.
A high degree of Norm-referencing. That is the act of comparison of oneself to others.	May become arrogant or élitist if not given the opportunity to mix with intellectual peers. Over inflated self esteem. May be intolerant of others and call them stupid. Alternatively, may down-grade performance in order to fit in or simply hide abilities.
Great verbal ability.	*Dominates discussions*. Uses this skill to avoid doing difficult tasks.
Advanced use of language.	This may alienate the child from age peers.
Generates original thought.	May be argumentative, oppositional to other's set ways of thinking. *Resents conformity.*
Sees off-beat solutions and has wild opinions.	*Frustrated at not being understood.* Others might consider the child odd or weird.
Persistent and goal-directed	Others may view this as *stubborn* and uncooperative.
Thinks in abstract terms very early in life.	May be preoccupied with death or the meaning of life. *Might reject detail in favor of concepts which may be seen as disrespectful by others - e.g. atheist belief.*
Deep thinker	Hates deadlines and therefore might avoid doing work at all rather than do half a job.

Characteristics often experienced by gifted individuals:

Are you a good problem solver?
Can you concentrate for long periods of time?
Are you perfectionistic?
Do you persevere with your interests?
Are you an avid reader?
Do you have a vivid imagination?
Do you enjoy doing jigsaw puzzles?
Often connect seemingly unrelated ideas?
Do you enjoy paradoxes?
Do you set high standards for yourself?
Do you have a good long-term memory?
Are you deeply compassionate?
Do you have persistent curiosity?
Do you have an excellent sense of humor?
Are you a keen observer?
Do you have a love of mathematics?
Do you need periods of contemplation?
Do you search for meaning in your life?
Are you aware of things that others are not?
Are you fascinated by words?
Are you highly sensitive?
Do you have strong moral convictions?
Do you often feel out-of-sync with others?
Are you perceptive or insightful?
Do you often question rules or authority?
Do you have organized collections?
Do you thrive on challenge?
Do you have extraordinary abilities and deficits?
Do you learn new things rapidly?
Feel overwhelmed by many interests/abilities?
Do you have a great deal of energy?
Often take a stand against injustice?
Do you feel driven by your creativity?
Love ideas and ardent discussion?
Were you advanced developmentally in childhood?
Have unusual ideas or perceptions?
Are you a complex person?

"If 75% of these characteristics fit you, you are probably a gifted adult.
[adapted from the Institute for the Study of Advanced Development / Gifted Development Center

"Giftedness was not commonly identified in children until recently, so many adults are unaware that they were gifted
as children. But even those who were identified tend to believe their giftedness disappeared before adulthood."

Giftedness is not a matter of degree but of a different quality of experiencing: vivid, absorbing, penetrating, encompassing, complex, commanding -- a way of being quiveringly alive." Michael Piechowski, PhD

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There is indirect evidence for atypical brain organization and innate talent in gifted children: Many gifted children and savants have enhanced right-hemisphere development, language-related difficulties, and autoimmune disorders. ... gifted children have social and emotional difficulties that set them apart. ...

Few gifted children go on to become adult creators because the skills and personality factors required to be a creator are very different from those typical of even the most highly gifted children.

from summary on medscape.com - about article in Am Psychol [2000] by Prof. Ellen Winner, Boston College and Project Zero, Harvard Graduate School of Education

Traits of highly creative people

- sensitive
- not motivated by money
- sense of destiny
- adaptable
- tolerant of ambiguity
- observant
- perceive world differently
- see possibilities
- question asker
- can synthesize correctly, often intuitively
- able to fantasize
- flexible
- fluent
- imaginative
- intuitive
- original
- ingenious
- energetic
- sense of humor
- self-actualizing
- self-disciplined
- self-knowledgeable
- specific interests
- divergent thinker
- curious
- open-ended
- independent
- severely critical
- non-conforming
- confident
- risk taker
- persistent

These represent those that at least 5 people wrote about or agreed were the traits of highly creative people. HIGHLY creative people, not just creative people.

Social/Individual Characteristics

Gifted: Independent, individualist, self-sufficient, stubborn. Bored by routine. Good sense of humor. Easily occupies own time without stimulation from others. Likes to be with and converse with adults and older children. Impatient with no challenge. Considered different by other children. Generally thoughtful, assuming leadership easily. Good sense of justice, dependable and responsible. Developing thinking.